

Parish of Ribbleton

St. Mary Magdalene (SMM) The Ascension (ASC) -Longsands (LS)

Sunday 2nd May
Fifth Sunday of Easter

Alleluia! Alleluia!

*“If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you,” says the Lord*
Alleluia! Alleluia!

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

FIRST READING (Acts 8:26-40)

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip,
“Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”).

This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.

The Spirit told Philip,

“Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet.

“Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?”

So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.”

The eunuch asked Philip,

“Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said,

“Look, here is water.

What can stand in the way of my being baptized?”

And he gave orders to stop the chariot.

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Psalm 22:25-31)

The response to the Psalm is:

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;

I will perform my vows

in the presence of those that fear you.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

those who seek the Lord shall praise him;

their hearts shall live for ever. **R/**

All the ends of the earth

shall remember and turn to the Lord,

and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.

For the kingdom is the Lord’s

and he rules over the nations.

How can those who sleep in the earth

bow down in worship,

or those who go down to the dust kneel before him? **R/**

He has saved my life for himself;

my descendants shall serve him;

this shall be told of the Lord for generations to come.

They shall come and make known his salvation,

to a people yet unborn,

declaring that he, the Lord, has done it. **R/**

SECOND READING (1 John 4:7-21)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is how God showed his love among us:

He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us:

He has given us of his Spirit.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment:

In this world we are like Jesus.

There is no fear in love.

But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.

The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us.

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar.

For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

And he has given us this command:

Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

GOSPEL (John 15:1-8)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you.

No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches.

If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”



Easter Reflection

Isn't nature great!

From what looked like barren soil and dead trees we now have beautiful blossom on the trees, vibrant spring flowers and new life everywhere!

It is just like the Resurrection of Jesus where, from darkness and death, emerged light and new life.

Our Gospel reading today continues with the theme of nurture within nature, comparing the tending of plants by the gardener (in this case the grape vine) to the pastoral care of both the individual and the church universal.

The passage emphasises the importance of belonging to and being tended by the gardener and also being an active member of the church.

It says - "*Apart from me you can do nothing*". How true that is!

I know that we can worship, pray and do good works alone and isolated from others, the past year has taught us that.

It has also made us realise that without the help, support and the comradeship of others, life seems harder and lacks direction and purpose.

We all have heard and in many cases used the saying "Sometimes you've got to be cruel to be kind".

This is often the case in gardening when thinning out plant beds, or as spoken of in the Gospel, pruning a vine. That the process seems harsh or too severe, but in the long term proves to be right and fruitful.

We can compare our church today to a plant, shrub or tree, needing constant attention from the gardener, (weeding and pruning etc.).

For without care and attention it will not reach its full potential, nor will its fruit be abundant.

So let us, as we emerge out of lockdown, put our faith and trust in God, the true Gardener, and his Son the true vine and accept change (if and when needed) to enable the church to flourish and bear much fruit.

Please think and pray about this in the coming months.

And remember –

'If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples'.

This reflection comes with my love and prayers.

Fr Keith



Intercessions

Loving God, Christ calls us to remain in him, the true vine, and to bear fruit to your glory. Wherever there is friction and conflict in your church, wherever communities are divided and weakened, prune and cleanse us. Give us a greater longing for your healing and a deeper trust in your forgiving love.

Bless those who guide and lead your people and all who proclaim your love to a hurting world, among them our own church leaders - our Bishops, Julian, Philip, and Jill.

Be with those whose faith is tested and wavering, and bless those who suffer persecution because of their faith. We hold before you the Christians of Gaza and Pakistan.

We ask your blessing on Fr Keith, Fr Chris, Linda and Captain David as they minister to our parish. Also on Jacqueline and Ron, our parish wardens, and all who work to make our worshipping communities places of warmth and welcome.

We give thanks for those who have served on our PCC over the past year and ask your blessing on those standing for election this month.

Lord, in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Loving God, the Ethiopian official sought to understand the truth of your good news in Christ. Open the hearts and minds of all in places of power and authority to pursue truth and justice and to give all peoples a reason to rejoice.

Wherever tangled political situations seem impossible to solve; wherever conflicting interests threaten or destroy peace, and the ears of the powerful are deaf to the cries of the oppressed, may we have ears always open to your Spirit's guidance.

We pray for our government and parliament. Grant them integrity, honour and humility, and the desire to serve the needs of all people.

Bless those who work to bring reconciliation and hope to broken and divided nations and to ensure a fair and proper sharing of the world's resources.

We hold before you those whose lives are damaged by war and dispute - or famine and deprivation. We pray for the people of Lebanon, Yemen, and of Syria, and for the peoples of India and Brazil.

Lord, in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Loving God, you call us to love one another. May we remain in Christ and bear the fruit of love for brother and sister, for neighbour, friend and stranger.

We pray for our parish, our neighbourhoods and our communities, - for all who live, and work, and raise their families here - and for those who work for our health, safety and well-being.

We hold before you those of our neighbours who struggle with the demands and needs of daily life, for those who are hungry, homeless or without work.

We pray especially those who need to turn to the Community Pantry and foodbanks for support. May we be sensitive and compassionate to their needs.

We pray for those standing in our local elections this month. May your kingdom values guide our decision making and our voting.

Lord, in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Loving God, you sent your Son into the world that we might live through him.

Perfect us in love, so we may face the trials of this world without fear.

Wherever the sick and suffering need comfort and assistance, wherever the housebound and elderly need help and company, wherever the bereaved and lost need hope and comfort may we be Christ's hands and feet bringing love and peace.

Bless and comfort those who are close to death and those who watch with them.

May they feel your gentle touch.

We hold before you all who suffer in body, mind or spirit or have a special need for prayer, remembering those named on our week-sheet, and those known to us personally.

We ask your blessing on those who suffer alone and feel they have no-one to pray for them. May they know the comfort of your presence.

Lord, in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Loving God, may love be made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment and be welcomed with all your children into the joy of heaven.

We ask your blessing on all who have died:

- on those who have been killed this week in the ongoing conflicts and disasters in our world, among them those killed in Israel and the many victims of covid-19.

- on those known to us who have died recently, and on those whose anniversary is around this time.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord,
and let light perpetual shine upon them.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory

Lord, in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Loving God, as we love one another you live in us and your love is made complete in us. May we remain in you and your word remain in us.

We bring to you now the silent prayers of our hearts for ourselves and those we love.

Lord, in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

We join our prayers with those of Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom we greet, saying

Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death

Merciful Father, Accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ Amen

If you would like to sing:

#God is love, his the care

https://youtu.be/Gju_BKA1PE

#A new commandment I give unto you

<https://youtu.be/aqM2UjI7Aas>

#Love divine

<https://youtu.be/dPbD2G3i-7Y>

#We have a gospel to proclaim

<https://youtu.be/B2FX0-kS7wA>

Sunday 9th May

Sixth Sunday of Easter

9:30am Eucharist at The Church of the Ascension

11:00am Eucharist at St. Mary Magdalene

Readings

Acts 10:44-48; Psalm 98;

1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

The Annual Parish Church Meeting

Please note the change of date:

This is now to be held at St Mary Magdalene's
on **Sunday 23rd May** after the Eucharist - 12.15pm.

This is to comply with Covid restrictions.

Baptism Preparation Class :

Monday 26 July, 7.30pm at St Mary Magdalene's

Don't forget the Community Pantry:

open on Tuesdays 10am -12noon.

Donations always welcome.

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